

Countywide Community Forums

Formerly known as King County Initiative 24

Dick Spady, Volunteer Coordinator; John & Jim Spady, Deputy Coordinators

<http://www.metrokc.gov/auditor/CCF>

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Roads & Transit in King County – What’s Next?

New citizen-outreach program in King County seeks 1000 volunteers to discuss “Transportation – Public Priorities, Choices, and Funding”

Seattle – With an ambitious goal to “improve the way we talk about important public issues,” Dick Spady, original sponsor of King County Initiative 24 and co-founder of Seattle’s *Dick’s Drive-In Restaurants*, today announced that “**Transportation – Public Priorities, Choices and Funding**” has been selected by County Auditor Cheryle Broom as the discussion topic for the first round of King County’s new *Countywide Community Forums*.

“Whether you drive a car, take the bus, ride a bike, walk or just pay taxes, transportation is an issue that affects everyone in King County,” said Spady. “Given the defeat of Proposition 1 in November, citizens at the grassroots level need to use the *Countywide Community Forums* to communicate their transportation priorities and concerns to King County’s policy makers.”

Authorized by King County Ordinance 15896 (which enacted the language of Initiative 24) the *Countywide Community Forums* is a network of periodic public forums where participants gather in small groups throughout King County to discuss current issues and provide important feedback to county government. The program is administered by Dick Spady and his two sons, John and Jim, who were appointed to serve as the program’s first volunteer coordinators. The program is overseen by King County Auditor Cheryle Broom.

Spady authored Initiative 24 to supplement King County’s traditional public hearing process by making it easier and more comfortable for people to share their opinions on important public issues. Spady’s proposal was supported by over 80,000 petition signatures and enacted into law in September by a unanimous vote of the King County Council.

The Countywide Community Forums program requires at least 1,000 people to enroll as participants in the discussion groups before the program can begin. The goal is to hold the first round of forums in March 2008. Participants must live or work in King County, agree to meet three or four times each year, and commit to spending about two hours per meeting. High school and college students who attend school in King County are also welcome to participate as part of a class project on civics, political science, or communications.

Instead of gathering at a big meeting at one place and time, where only a few people can talk and most have to listen, the *Countywide Community Forums* program asks volunteers to meet in small groups at times and places convenient to them. Because participants meet in groups

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of only 4 to 12 people, every participant has time to comfortably share his or her opinions with other members of the group before the open discussion period begins – a process which Spady thinks will be “very similar to talking with friends and family around the dinner table.”

To ensure that the opinions of all participants are properly understood, all of the small group meetings are networked together in two ways. First, everyone watches the same short video and reads the same summary of the key facts and different perspectives on the issue under discussion, “kind of like a video voter’s pamphlet”, noted Spady. Second, before participants leave their meeting, everyone fills out a detailed written survey that asks specific questions about the current topic and also asks participants which topic they would like to discuss next. The surveys are then tabulated with the results posted on the web and shared with government officials and the media.

To enroll, visit <http://CountywideCommunityForums.org/>, call 206/296-1633 (or toll free 800/369-2584), or email CommunityForums@KingCounty.gov.

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